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STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM  
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E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [IS KMDR MEDIA REACTION REPORT](#)  
SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

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SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:  
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- [1](#). Mideast
- [2](#). Democracy in Mideast

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Key stories in the media:  
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All media reported that PM Sharon hosted PA Chairman [President] Mahmoud Abbas on Tuesday at his Jerusalem residence for their first working visit since the Sharm el-Sheikh visit. During the two-hour meeting, Sharon demanded that the PA act against terrorist organizations and prevent attacks. Abbas demanded that Israel "strengthen his hand" so that he could act. Despite their differences, agreements were reached on a few issues, such as coordination of the disengagement. Sharon announced a number of goodwill gestures: Bethlehem and Qalqilya are to be handed over to PA control within two weeks; the number of Palestinian workers allowed in Israel will be increased; the checkpoints will be improved and some frail veteran prisoners -- with 'blood on their hands' -- will be released. On the other hand, Sharon turned down several of Abbas's demands. Sharon said that if the PA did not act against terror, Israel would be forced to act. The media reported that senior Palestinian sources expressed deep disappointment about the meeting.

Ha'aretz reported that, a few hours before the Sharon-Abbas meeting, Palestinian sources reported that the IAF had fired a number of missiles at a structure in Gaza in an assassination attempt, causing no injuries. Ha'aretz reported that Israeli security sources would not comment on the report, but quoted officials as confirming that targeted assassinations were being resumed. Jerusalem Post also reported that the IAF had botched an assassination attempt. Israel Radio cited threats made by five Palestinian groups to resume attacks inside the Green Line, should Israel continue its assassination policy.

The collision of a passenger train with a truck in the northern Negev on Tuesday afternoon, in which eight people were killed and close to 200 others were injured, dominates the headlines. The media reported that anti-disengagement groups announced that they were postponing for a week plans to block traffic at major junctions throughout the country in the wake of the collision in the Negev. Leading media reported that on Monday or Tuesday (sources vary), police arrested 11 residents of the Yitzhar settlement in the West Bank after receiving information they were gathering road spikes and "ninja" throwing stars in preparation for the demonstration originally planned for today. Hatzofe reported that the Yesha Council of Jewish Settlements in the Territories plans to start its massive anti-disengagement campaign by mid-July. Israel Radio reported that several hundred reserve officers and soldiers took part in a meeting last night in Jerusalem to encourage disobeying orders in the evacuation of Gush Katif and the northern West Bank. Israel Radio reported that 11 Islamic Jihad militants have been arrested in the West Bank.

Israel Radio cited claims by the international group Human Rights Watch that the IDF has whitewashed hundreds of cases of killings and injuries during the Intifada.

Jerusalem Post reported that on Monday, the Jerusalem Municipality proposed that Arab residents of the East

Jerusalem neighborhood of Silwan present the city with an alternative housing plan to scores of illegally constructed homes in the area slated for demolition.

Jerusalem Post reported that the Israel Navy has inaugurated a program to combine its elite Naval Academy with a degree from the University of Haifa. While the University has likened its program to the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis, the Navy sees it as a way to attract high-caliber youth to its professional service.

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1. Mideast:  
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Summary:  
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Diplomatic correspondent Aluf Benn wrote on page one of independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "Even the Americans are wondering whether to continue assisting Abbas."

Diplomatic correspondent Ben Caspit wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv: "The days of grace are over. The days of reckoning have begun."

Columnist Tovah Lazaroff wrote in conservative, independent Jerusalem Post: "While Abbas's failure threatens to rock Sharon's own, it is Abbas's own future that was more imperiled as he walked out of the room."

Ha'aretz editorialized: "Egypt can prevent smuggling without changing the [Israeli-Egyptian peace] treaty.... The evacuation of Gaza should not be a hostage to the changing of the peace treaty." Liberal op-ed writer Ofer Shelach commented in mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "In an attempt to assist Abu Mazen, the U.S. administration decided that the right thing to do was to demolish the houses.... When the Americans speak ... Jerusalem listens."

Ultra-Orthodox Yated Ne'eman editorialized: "[Sharon] intends to evacuate the Gaza district without getting anything in exchange, and, if the U.S. pressures him, an increasing number of areas in the West Bank, too."

Block Quotes:  
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I. "No Surprises in Jerusalem"

Diplomatic correspondent Aluf Benn wrote on page one of independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (June 22): "In spite of the expressions of disappointment and disparagement on both sides, it seems the meeting expressed the exact state of the relationship between the two sides. They are trapped in a chicken-or-egg conundrum: which comes first, the Palestinian war on terror or the strengthening of Abbas' government with goodwill gestures by Israel?.... Israeli officials are asking what the point is of strengthening a person who can't exert control, and whose weakness is immediately translated into a rise in terror.... The weakening of Abbas is very troubling to the U.S. administration. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who came to the

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area last week, was impressed by the seriousness of a report she received from her security coordinator [Lieutenant] General William Ward, who described the crumbling of the PA, power struggles and infighting at senior levels of Fatah. She asked her Israeli hosts to do all they could to help Abbas. Washington understands that Abbas's fall would be considered a failure of President George W. Bush's policy of democratization. But even the Americans are wondering whether to continue assisting Abbas or if the time has come to realize that nothing will help him, and even if he gets extra assistance, he won't be able to give anything in return."

II. "Atmosphere of Missed Opportunity"

Diplomatic correspondent Ben Caspit wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv (June 22): "Abu Mazen looked more lost than ever on Tuesday.... Abu Mazen is very good at talking. Action is not his forte. Sharon, who is in a difficult bind himself, is losing his patience. On one hand, there are the Americans, who are demanding to strengthen Abu Mazen here and now. On the other hand, there is the Israeli public. On the third hand, the political situation -- the mounting terror -- the attempt to delay disengagement.... [On Tuesday,] a sour

taste of failure hovered in the air. An atmosphere of missed opportunity.... The days of grace are over. The days of reckoning have begun. The crucial hour is approaching, the way disengagement is implemented (if it does not hit a shoal along the way) will determine its continuation. As weak as he is, Abu Mazen holds the keys to what will happen here at the end of the summer, and in several winters to come after that. That is how it looks, too."

### III. "Abbas and Sharon Need Each Other"

Columnist Tovah Lazaroff wrote in conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (June 22): "Unlike his predecessor, Yasser Arafat, who never understood the need to move from a terrorist state into a nation, Abbas apparently believes in a democratic state, not because of pressure from Israel or the international community but because he believes it holds the best promise for the Palestinian people. A strong military strike is likely to put a more extreme leader in place, thus helping to ensure that disengagement becomes a last stand, rather than the first step toward a peaceful solution. Sharon, therefore, is willing to go a long way to help Abbas, but his price tag is one that Abbas does not have the ability to pay: stop the violence.... The choice, Sharon seemed to be saying to Abbas, is yours. While Abbas's failure threatens to rock Sharon's own, it is Abbas's own future that was more imperiled as he walked out of the room."

### IV. "The Philadelphi Excuse"

Ha'aretz editorialized (June 22): "The purpose of disengagement is to give the Palestinians full sovereignty over the area to be transferred to their control. Without removing the Israel Defense Forces from the Philadelphi route that divides the two parts of Rafah, Israel cannot argue, politically or legally, that it has completed the withdrawal. Since the disengagement is supposed to be unilateral, Israel has refrained from negotiating conditions or proposing reciprocal arrangements.... Therefore, Israel did not work toward an agreement with the Palestinians on the disposition of the Philadelphi route. Leaving the route might increase the immediate security risk to Israel, caused by the smuggling of arms into Gaza and the threat of renewed firing. Whether or not the Palestinians do their part to prevent smuggling from the eastern side of Rafah, the Egyptians have the capability to thwart these acts from the western side. This capability is contingent on reinforcing the Egyptian presence in Sinai.... Egypt can prevent smuggling without changing the treaty.... Egypt does not want to do so, for its own reasons. Talks being conducted with senior Egyptian officials in Jerusalem and Israeli officials in Cairo are for American eyes only.... The evacuation of Gaza should not be a hostage to the changing of the peace treaty."

### IV. "A City of Hope, an Army of Fear"

Liberal op-ed writer Ofer Shelach commented in mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (June 22): "The [IDF] officers didn't want to deal with the destruction of [settlers'] houses, mainly because of the will to leave the Gaza Strip as quickly as possible. One of the officers told me about one month ago that the army is intent on destroying them, but that, on the other hand, Hamas is trailing the army. The Israeli defense establishment's concerns overcome any idea of hope, and the government indeed adopted the army's position and decided not to destroy the houses. Then, the Americans entered the picture. In an attempt to assist Abu Mazen, the U.S. administration decided that the right thing to do was to demolish the houses.... When the Americans speak ... Jerusalem listens. During her visit to the region this week, Secretary Rice announced that the houses would indeed be demolished, and that the Palestinians would deal with the removal of the ruins and the reconstruction.... [In such cases,] the only rescue may only come from Washington: if the U.S. insists on intervening and imposing reason on Israel, it is the only force that can overcome the IDF, too."

### VI. "Unconditional Withdrawal"

Ultra-Orthodox Yated Ne'eman editorialized (June 22): "[At the beginning of his term,] Sharon forcefully announced that there would be negotiations under fire, and that, before they receive anything from Israel, the Palestinians must disarm the terrorist groups.... Sharon's declarations aren't guaranteed at all. He intends to evacuate the Gaza district without getting anything in exchange, and, if the U.S. pressures him, an increasing number of areas in the West Bank, too,

even if Palestinian fire is fully resumed.... Only the cynical Sharon, who has no inhibitions, is capable of deluding the public, as if there were a connection between the Israeli withdrawal and the elimination of Palestinian terror."

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12. Democracy in Mideast:  
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Summary:  
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Conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized:  
"It is clear that the U.S. is intent on adding fuel to the fire of democracy that Bush lit in this region."

Block Quotes:  
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"Democracy's Voice"

Conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (June 22): "On Monday, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice made what was perhaps the most powerful case for freedom and democracy since President George W. Bush's second inaugural address in January. Most importantly, she did so in Cairo, the heart not only of the Arab world, but of a country that has symbolized the gap between rhetoric and the nature of the friends America keeps.... With this speech, it is clear that the U.S. is intent on adding fuel to the fire of democracy that Bush lit in this region. Never has America spoken so bluntly and with such specificity about so many nations throughout the Arab and Muslim world, whether 'friend' or foe. We should recognize as a nation that our security and the prospects for peace depend not only on our own strength but on the success of this regional American project."

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